

AGENDA
CALIFORNIA TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES COMMITTEE (CTCDC)
March 19, 2009 Meeting
Basement Auditorium, 1120 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
Starting Time 3:00 p.m.

Organization Items

1 Introduction

2 Public Comments

At this time, members of the public may comment on any item not appearing on the agenda. Matters presented under this item cannot be discussed or acted upon by the Committee at this time. For items appearing on the agenda, the public is invited to make comments at the time the item is considered by the Committee. Any person addressing the Committee will be limited to a maximum of five (5) minutes so that all interested parties have an opportunity to speak. When addressing Committee, please state your name, address, and business or organization you are representing for the record.

Agenda Items

3 Public Hearing

Prior to adopting rules and regulations prescribing uniform standards and specifications for all official traffic control devices placed pursuant to Section 21400 of the California Vehicle Code (CVC), the Department of Transportation is required to consult with local agencies and hold public hearings.

09-10 Section 2B.13 Speed Limit Sign (R2-1) of CA MUTCD
 (Request submitted by Caltrans)

[Page #s](#)
(Introduction) [4-10](#)
(Henley)

4 Next Meeting

5 Adjourn

ITEM UNDER EXPERIMENTATION

04-9	Request to Experiment with “Watch The Road” Sign (Proposed by the Los Angeles DOT)	(Bahadori)
06-2	Experiment with Colored Bike Lane (Proposed by the City of San Francisco)	(Banks)
06-5	Clear The Way Signage (Drive Damaged Vehicle to Shoulder) (Proposed by the CHP and MTC)	(Whiteford)
07-7	Experimentation by Implementation of Two New School Site Loading Signs	
07-19	Wildlife Corridor Signage (Proposed by the County of San Bernardino)	(Babico)
08-7	Request for Experimentation with new Warning Sign for Bicyclists (Proposed by the City/Co of San Francisco)	(Wong)
08-20	Request to Experimentation with Flashing Yellow Arrow for Permissive Right Turn Movement	(Mansourian)
08-21	Proposal to Experiment with Regulatory Sign “BIKES IN LANE” with Bicycle Symbol (Originally submitted as “Bike May Use Full Lane”)	(Henley)

Pending Items for Caltrans Action

- 01-1 U-Turn Signal Heads Indicator
- 02-15 Radar Guided Dynamic Curve Warning Sign
- 06-9 Proposal to adopt C43 (CA) signs
- 07-1 Proposal to revise the sizes for the Supplemental School Plaques (S4-3, W16-7p and W16-9p)
- 07-5 Proposal to Amend Section 2C.29 Advance Traffic Control Signs (W3-1, W3-2, W3-3, W3-4)
- 07-12 Amendment to CA MUTCD Section 4E.08 Pedestrian Detectors
- 07-18 Proposal to Amend "FWY Detour With Arrow" SC9 (CA) Sign and Adopt "Exit With Arrow Sign"
- 07-22 Proposal to adopt "Trucks Entering Exiting" sign C44 (CA)
- 07-23 Bus Preferential Only Lane Signs
- 07-24 Installation of School Assembly C in Rural Areas with Sidewalks
- 08-3 Amendment to CA MUTCD Section 4D.17 Visibility, Shielding, and Positioning of Signal Faces
- 08-4 Bus Preferential Only Lane Signs
- 08-5 No Double - Parking Anytime Commercial Vehicles Signs
- 08-9 Proposal to amend policies for the STOP sign
- 08-10 Proposal to adopt "WATCH FOR STOPPED VEHICLES" sign
- 08-12 Report DRUNK DRIVERS – CALL 911 (G81-6X(CA))
- 08-13 MUTCD 2003 Revision No. 2 Maintaining Traffic Sign Retroreflectivity
- 08-14 Proposal to amend recommendations made by the CTCDC in regards to Section 2B.13 Speed Limit Sign (R2-1) of CA MUTCD
- 08-15 Proposal to amend Fire Station SG38 (CA) & SG39 (CA) signs
- 08-19 Proposal to adopt ACTIVATED BLANK-OUT Directional and DO NOT ENTER & WRONG WAY signs.
- 08-24 Proposal to Adopt POST OFFICE Directional SG60(CA) sign

09-10 Section 2B.13 Speed Limit Sign (R2-1) of CA MUTCD

Discussion: The issue that will be discussed is the impact of a “soft floor” versus a “hard floor” in establishing a speed limit on public roadways and other possible alternatives.

Agency Making Request/Sponsor: Caltrans

Background:

The Policy on Speed Limit before 2004 (Traffic Manual)

The speed limit normally should be established at the first five mile per hour increment below the 85th percentile speed. However, in matching existing conditions with the traffic safety needs of the community, engineering judgement may indicate the need of further reduction of five miles per hour, as authorized and regulated by the California Vehicle Code (CVC).

Example:

“Prior to 2004, California regulations stated that speeds should be rounded down to the nearest 5 mph increment. Therefore, if the 85th percentile speed was 39 mph, the speed limit prior to 2004 would be set at 35 mph. Additionally, if the engineer determined there were conditions not readily apparent to the motorist to justify an additional reduction, the speed limit could be lowered to 30 mph, a full 9 mph below the 85th percentile speed.”

Current CA MUTCD Policy on Speed Limit (after 2004):

Guidance:

When a speed limit is to be posted, it should be established at the nearest 10 km/h (5 mph) increment of the 85th-percentile speed of free-flowing traffic.

Option:

The posted speed may be reduced by 10 km/h (5 mph) from the nearest 10 km/h or 5 mph increment of the 85th-percentile speed, where engineering study indicates the need for a reduction in speed to match existing conditions with the traffic safety needs of the community.

Example:

An example of the application of this speed limit criteria is as follows:

- If the 85th percentile speed in a speed survey was 60 km/h (37 mph), then the speed limit would be posted at 35 mph or optionally reduced to 30 mph. However,
- If the 85th percentile speed in a speed survey was 61 km/h (38 mph), then the speed limit would be posted at 40 mph or optionally reduced to 35 mph.

Problem:

The current policy listed in the CA MUTCD (as shown above) forces an increased speed limit in conditions where the 85th percentile speed is 23, 28, 33, 38, 43 or 48 mph. When the 85th percentile is 38 mph as shown in the above example, then according to the policy, the posted speed should be rounded to the nearest 5 mph increment which is 40 mph. The term “nearest” has caused many concerns with local agencies.

Some local agencies and law enforcement agencies got together and proposed legislation to amend the requirements of the Engineering & Traffic Survey (E&TS), added some new language and replaced the language of the Speed Trap law (CVC 40802). Senator Ellen Corbett introduced Senate Bill 848 on February 23, 2007. The first proposal was to change the current law and would impact regulations regarding the establishment of speed limits and to require consultation with law enforcement officers in the state to establish and enforce speed limits by using speed radar. The bill was amended two times and the final version proposed to only amend CVC 40802.

The Auto Club of Southern California, California State Automobile Association of Northern CA and many other stakeholders advocated pushing bill off for the time being. However, they promised that the CTCDC would discuss this issue again and develop alternative solutions. Due to SB 848 and concerns raised by some municipalities, the CTCDC Vice Chairman Hamid Bahadori believed that it was appropriate to have a comprehensive review of the “rounding” issue in the context of the overall rules and regulations regarding establishment of speed limits, and take necessary steps, as may be needed, to modify and/or further clarify the current language in the CA MUTCD about this issue.

The CTCDC is the forum where Caltrans fulfills its obligation to consult with local agencies and the public before adopting rules and regulations prescribing uniform standards and specifications for official traffic control devices used in California.

The Committee consists of eight members appointed by the organizations that they represent. There are two representatives from both the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties. There is one representative each from the Automobile Club of Southern California, the California State Automobile Association, the California Highway Patrol, and Caltrans.

The whole debate on this issue was initiated due to the Senate Bill 848. This bill was initially supported by the Sheriffs Association and the CHP, which at later date CHP suspended their support for it.

For more detail visit at the following website:

http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/signtech/newtech/agenda/Item07-16_SB848.pdf

Action Taken By the CTCDC During Various Meetings:**June 7, 2007 CTCDC Meeting:**

The CTCDC discussed the speed limit issue raised due to SB 848 and the Committee recommended the following:

During the June 2007 CTCDC meeting, the Committee recommended discussing this item on October 10, 2007 in a workshop. The CTCDC Chairman Mansourian sent a letter to all the cities and counties asking for their participation. In the event a city/county was not able to attend the workshop, they were to submit their written comments.

For details, see CTCDC Minutes pages 19 through 21 on the following website:

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/signtech/newtech/minutes/Min060707.pdf>

October 10, 2007 Workshop and October 11, 2007 CTCDC Meeting:

On October 10, 2007, a workshop was held to discuss the policy to establish speed limits on public roadways. There were over 40 participants from public agencies, council members, and law enforcement. The participants provided very good comments. They were divided into four groups and each group was asked to discuss four alternatives presented to them. The groups were not limited to four alternatives, but instead could come up with a new alternative if they believe it would work better.

After the lengthy discussion during the workshop and the CTCDC regular meeting, the Committee recommended the following language for the speed limit policy:

“When a speed limit is to be posted, it should be within 10 km/h or 5 mph of the 85th-percentile speed of free-flowing traffic.”

The speed limit may be further reduced by 10 km/h or 5 mph, if unusual conditions not readily apparent to drivers exist, as long as it is in compliance with CVC Section 22358.5

If used, a one time 10 km/h or 5 mph reduction shall be documented in writing. The final speed limit shall not be less the 50th percentile.

For details, see CTCDC Minutes pages 4 through 12 on the following website:

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/signtech/newtech/minutes/Min101107.pdf>

January 31, 2008 CTCDC Meeting:

The Committee discussed the Caltrans draft policy in an open public meeting and recommended the following language for the speed limit policy:

Standard:

After an engineering study has been made in accordance with established traffic engineering practices, the Speed Limit (R2-1) sign (see Figure 2B-1) shall display the limit established by law, ordinance, regulation, or as adopted by the authorized agency. The speed limits shown shall be in multiples of 10 km/h or 5 mph.

Guidance:

At least once every 5, 7 or 10 years, State and local agencies should reevaluate non-statutory speed limits on segments of their roadways that have undergone a significant change in roadway characteristics or surrounding land use since the last review (see CVC 40802).

No more than three speed limits should be displayed on any one Speed Limit sign or assembly.

Standard:

When a speed limit is to be posted, it shall be within 10 km/h or 5 mph of the 85th-percentile speed of free-flowing traffic, except as shown below in the option.

Option:

The posted speed limit may be reduced by 10 km/h (5 mph) from the 10 km/h or 5 mph increment of the 85th-percentile speed, if unusual conditions not readily apparent to drivers, such as significantly higher collision rates or other factors exist, as long as those conditions are in compliance with all the appropriate sections of the CVC, especially CVC Sections 627 and 22358.5.

Standard:

If used, a one-time 10 km/h or 5-mph reduction, according to CVC Sections 627 and 22358.5, shall be documented in writing. The final, posted speed limit shall not be less than the 50th-percentile speed

For details, see CTCDC Minutes pages 5 through 12 on the following website:

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/signtech/newtech/minutes/Min013108.pdf>

What happened After January 31, 2008?

After the January 31, 2008 CTCDC meeting, the City of San Jose and others continued to oppose the CTCDC recommendation. They and others voiced their opposition and lobbied for amended language. In response, the California Association of Police Chiefs formally opposed the CTCDC recommendation. Caltrans received approximately 20 letters in opposition to the recommended speed limit policy change by the CTCDC. On the other hand, several cities such as Los Angeles, Santa Ana, Thousand Oaks, some citizens, and groups such as the California Teamsters sent correspondence to Caltrans and CTCDC supporting their recommendation.

The City of San Jose recommended following “guidance” statement in lieu of the “standard” statement recommended by the Committee during the January 31, 2008 meeting.

Guidance:

The final, posted speed limit shall ~~should~~ not be less than the 50th-percentile speed, unless there are unusual conditions not readily apparent to drivers, such as significantly higher collision rates or other factors exist, as long as those conditions are in compliance with all of the appropriate sections of the CVC, especially CVC Sections 627 and 22358.5.

Caltrans Agreed with San Jose's Request to Reopen the Item and Placed on the CTCDC Agenda for the May 2008 Meeting:

May 29, 2008 CTCDC Meeting:

During the May 2008 CTCDC meeting, Chairman Bahadori appointed a subcommittee which reviewed the proposed motion, and another discussion took place during the hearing of this item and recommended language for the next meeting to receive full review and action from the Committee. The subcommittee members were as follows:

Farhad Mansourian (Marin County), John Fisher (LA), Wayne Henley (Caltrans), Jacob Babico (SBD County), Chief Steve Lerwill (CHP), Jeff Knowles (City of Vacaville), James Helmer and Laura Wells (City of San Jose), Dave Roseman (City of Long Beach) and Monica Suter (City of Santa Ana).

Summary of the Subcommittee Meeting Held on August 1, 2008, to Discuss CA MUTCD Section 2B.13, Speed Limit Sign

Conclusion and subcommittee recommendation to CTCDC:

Some members were concerned that by providing a standard and guidance and options all together, the reader could be confused and frustrated trying to determine what is actually required to set a speed limit below the 85th-percentile.

The Sub Committee proposed a recommendation that was documented. When a vote was called for on this version, the vote was 5 in favor of supporting the proposed wording and 3 not in favor of supporting the proposed wording (with Caltrans, City of Santa Ana and CHP being the dissenting votes). The minority members of the Subcommittee recommended keeping the 50th percentile as the "hard floor" that no speed limit under any conditions shall be posted under it.

Subcommittee's Proposal for the full Committee to consider on Sept 18, 2008:

Section 2B.13 Speed Limit Sign (R2-1)

Support:

The establishment of speed limits can become an emotional issue in many communities and a rational, objective, and defensible determination is necessary to maintain public confidence in the process. Speed limits are normally set near the 85th-percentile speed that statistically represents one standard deviation above the average speed and establishes the upper limit of what is considered reasonable and prudent. As with most laws, speed limits

need to depend on the voluntary compliance of the greater majority of motorists. Speed limits cannot be set arbitrarily low, as they would create violators of the majority, would not command the respect of the public, and would deteriorate traffic safety.

Standard:

When a speed limit is to be posted, it shall be within 10 km/h or 5 mph of the 85th-percentile speed of free-flowing traffic, except as shown in the option, below.

Option:

The posted speed may be reduced by 10 km/h (5 mph) from the 10 km/h (5 mph) increment below the 85th-percentile speed, in compliance with sections 627 and 22358.5 of the CVC.

Guidance:

The final posted speed limit should not be less than the 50th-percentile speed.

Standard:

If the final posted speed limit is not within 10 km/h (5 mph) of the 85th-percentile speed or is below the 50th-percentile speed, it shall be documented in writing that cites the conditions and justification for the lowered speed, in compliance with sections 627 and 22358.5 of the CVC.

The proposed language then was placed as an agenda item for the next meeting so other agencies get the opportunity to review it and provide comments during the September meeting.

For details, see CTCDC Meeting Minutes pages 15 through 27 on the following website:

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/signtech/newtech/minutes/Min052908.pdf>

September 17 & 18 CTCDC Meeting:

The draft language recommended by the Subcommittee was placed on the CTCDC agenda and it was discussed in an open public meeting and the Committee recommended adoption of the following language:

Support:

The establishment of speed limits can be an emotional issue, and a rational, objective, defensible determination is necessary to maintain public confidence in the process. Speed limits are normally set near the 85th-percentile speed that statistically represents one standard deviation above the average speed and establishes the upper limit of what is considered reasonable and prudent. As with most laws, speed limits need to depend on the voluntary compliance of the greater majority of motorists. Speed limits cannot be set arbitrarily low, as they would create violators of the majority and would not command the respect of the public.

Standard:

When a speed limit is to be posted, it shall be within 10 km/h or 5 mph of the

85th-percentile speed of free-flowing traffic, except as shown in the option, below.**Option:**

The posted speed may be reduced by 10 km/h (5 mph) from the 10 km/h (5 mph) increment below the 85th-percentile speed, in compliance with sections 627 and 22358.5 of the CVC.

Guidance:

The final posted speed limit should not be less than the 50th-percentile speed.

Standard:

If the speed limit to be posted is not within 10 km/h (5 mph) of the 85th-percentile speed or is below the 50th-percentile speed, the engineering study shall be documented in writing and shall cite the conditions and justification for the lowered speed, in compliance with sections 627 and 22358.5 of the CVC.

For details, see CTCDC Meeting Minutes pages 36 through 41 on the following website:

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/signtech/newtech/minutes/Min09171808.pdf>

Current Status:

CHP strongly opposes any “guidance” method that will allow any posted speed limit under any conditions to be below the 50th percentile of the surveyed speeds. They recommend that the wording in the manual be “the final posted speed limit **shall** not be below the 50th percentile of speed.”

Caltrans Director and CHP Commissioner have had several discussions about this issue, and have requested for special meeting of the CTCDC on March 19, 2009 to further discuss this issue directly with the CTCDC members in an open public meeting.